SPECIAL INSERT: DEATH TALKS ABOUT AIDS AND SAFER SEX

No. 46 FEB. '93

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READERS

"have you got anything with a happy ending?"

THE

brief

SANDMAN™

Dreamings of meetings of dreaming?

The trouble with gods

Life isn't pleasant, petrified

Mervyn sets him straight

Tempus Frangit.

The trouble with mortals

written by

NEIL GAIMAN

illustrated by

JILL THOMPSON

and

VINCE LOCKE

Scritch scritch scritch scritch scritch scritch

Scritch

Sccrrriiitch

I'D? BUYED? CRIED? DIED? HM? DRIED? EYE'D? FRIED...? HMM... FUH-FUH-FUH-FUH...

AHA! I HAVE IT!

Scritch Scritch Scritch Scritch Scritch

THERE, IT'S FINISHED. ARE YOU READY FOR THIS, BARNABAS?

As I'll ever be.

AHEM.
I CALL THIS BASILISK AND COCKATRICE: A MORAL POEM.
I DREAMED I SAW A BASILISK THAT BASKED UPON A ROCKY SHORE I LOOKED UPON THE BASILISK...
WITH EYES OF STONE I LOOKED NO MORE.
I DREAMED I SAW A COCKATRICE A-CHEWING ON A PIECE OF BONE I GAZED UPON THE COCKATRICE...
TO LOOK UPON A BASILISK IS REALLY NEVER WORTH THE RISK TO GAZE UPON A COCKATRICE IS PERMANENT AND NEVER NICE.
FOR IT CAN NEVER BE DENIED LIFE ISN'T PLEASANT, PETRIFIED.
ONE CANNOT GAZE WITH EYES OF STONE.

Is that it?

IT IS INDEED.

Ah. Well, at least it wasn't long.

I TAKE IT YOU WEREN'T OVERLY IMPRESSED, THEN.

Doggerel. Rubbishy doggerel.

REALLY?

Really. You also overuse the word "never" in the final stanza.

WELL, YOU'D KNOW. EH? DOGGEREL? EH?

Spare me. So, what remarkable feats are we going to accomplish today?

MAYBE YOU'LL GAZE UP AT ME ADORINGLY FROM TIME TO TIME, MY FAITHFUL HOUND.

Hmph. In your dreams.

I DON'T DREAM. WOULDN'T DO TO GIVE TOO MUCH AWAY. ESPECIALLY NOT NOW.

I don't see what you're so worried about.

NO? AH, BARNABAS, THAT'S BECAUSE YOU NEVER MET MY FAMILY.

THE USUAL. *I'M* GOING TO WORK ON A PAINTING. ***YOU'RE*** GOING TO SIT IN THE SUN, SCRATCH FOR FLEAS, ROMP ABOUT, EAT AND SLEEP.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU DON'T WANT TO GO WITH ME ANY MORE?

I mean exactly what I say, sister. I have gone as far with you as I will go.

BUT YOU SAID. YOU TOLD ME. YOU SAID YOU KNEW WHERE WE WERE GOING TO GO NEXT.

YOU SAID.

And I meant what I said. I know exactly where we are going to go. I will go back to my realm, Delirium, and you will go back to yours.

BUT OUR BROTHER. WE'RE LOOKING FOR HIM. WE HAVE TO KEEP LOOKING.

We do not have to do anything, Delirium.

All we have done thus far is bring death and damage to those we seek.

No more.

YOU NEVER LIKED ME. I THOUGHT THAT YOU LIKED ME MAYBE IN THE END, AND YOU WOULDN'T BE HORRID THIS TIME AND THAT YOU WERE MY FRIEND AND EVERYTHING.

AND I THOUGHT WE COULD FIND HIM AND MAKE EVERYTHING OKAY AGAIN. I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.

Friends, my sister? I thought we were family.

And we have gone as far together as we will go. Farewell.

OKAY.

WELL.

I SEE. IT'S LIKE THAT.

WELL, I'LL BE BACK IN MY REALM THEN.

IF YOU WANT ME.

IF ANYONE WANTS ME.

Stop that.

Lucien!

MY LORD?

I am back, Lucien.

It's over.

SIX: LIFE ISN'T PLEASANT, PETRIFIED — THE PARTING OF THE WAYS — THE TROUBLE WITH MORTALS — DREAMINGS OF MEETING OR MEETINGS OF DREAMING? — THE TROUBLE WITH GODS — MERVYN SETS HIM STRAIGHT — "HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING WITH A HAPPY ENDING?" — TEMPUS FRANGIT.

THE

SANDMAN™

featuring characters created by Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg

Written by Neil Gaiman; Pencilled by Jill Thompson; Inked by Vince Locke; Colored by Danny Vozzo; Lettered by Todd Klein; Edited by Karen Berger with the assistance of Lisa Aufenanger.

Pharamond?

LORD MORPHEUS? IS THAT YOU?

Yes, it is.

AND HOW DO YOUR TRAVELS GO?

I am no longer travelling in the waking world.

NO? AH. WELL, I TRUST YOUR JOURNEY WAS PRODUCTIVE.

It was... interesting.

I am afraid when I curtailed our journeying, your car was left behind.

NO PROBLEM. I'LL SEND A TEAM OUT TO PICK IT UP.

Pharamond?

I have an apology to make to you. The woman, Ruby. She is dead.

There was a fire... I am... convinced... that she was killed, directly, or indirectly, because she was aiding my sister in our quest.

RUBY'S DEAD?

Yes.

AH ME. THAT'S THE *TROUBLE* WITH MORTALS. THEY *DO* THAT. NOT TO WORRY, EH?

Pharamond...?

YES, LORD MORPHEUS.

Do you not regret Ruby's death?

I TRY NOT TO *LET* MYSELF GET OVERLY *FOND* OF THEM. IT *ONLY* LEADS TO SORROW.

AND YOU?

I knew her but briefly.

SO. YOU'VE *FINISHED* WITH YOUR QUEST, THEN?

Finished? Perhaps. I no longer require your aid, however.

IF THERE'S *ANYTHING* I CAN DO...

If there is, I will let you know. Fare well.

THE THRONE ROOM, WHEREVER IT HAPPENS TO BE, IS LOCATED AT THE PRECISE HEART OF THE DREAMING.

AND THE LORD OF DREAMS, WHO CREATED THIS PLACE FROM FORMLESS TUMULT LONG AGO, MENTALLY CLOSES AND SECURELY FASTENS EACH AND EVERY DOOR BETWEEN THE THRONE ROOM AND TO THE CASTLE OUTSIDE, TO THE WAKING WORLD, TO THE DREAMING.

THERE ARE MANY DOORS TO THE CENTER, SOME OF THEM OBVIOUS, SOME OF THEM LESS SO, AND THE PROCESS TAKES SOME TIME.

STILL, HE IS PATIENT. WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND, HE CAN BE METICULOUS.

AND, IN THE END, HE IS ALONE IN HIS THRONE ROOM. ALL DOORS TO THE OUTSIDE ARE CLOSED. NO ONE OUTSIDE THE ROOM WOULD EVEN BE ABLE TO FIND IT.

ASSURED OF HIS PRIVACY, HE BEGINS TO CONJURE AND CREATE.

THE SAND TUMBLES LIKE DUST FROM HIS HAND, AND A LOW WIND SEIZES IT AND CASTS IT ONTO THE FLOOR.

HUGE DUNES RISE, THEN, GOLDEN AND UMBER. THE SKY ABOVE IS VAST AND VIOLET, A SKY OF OLDER DAYS.

PRESENTLY THE MOON RISES.

I walk across the dreaming sands under the pale moon: through the dreams of countries and cities, past dreams of places long gone and times beyond recall.

Ghost cats prowl the shadows and hills, the desert gullies and ravines.

At the edge of the desert is the City of Bubastis.

The City is Bubastis as she never was, save in the dreams of a long-dead builder; and in the dreams of a blind child dead four thousand years, who had never seen the city she lived in all her short life; and in the dreams of the goddess of that place.

The dreams of Bast.

HELLO, DREAM.

My Lady Bast.

IT IS STRANGE TO SEE YOU. TODAY I FOUND MYSELF THINKING OF YOU. I *FORGET* EXACTLY WHY.

TELL ME--AM I SIMPLY *DREAMING* THAT WE ARE MEETING? OR ARE WE *ACTUALLY* MEETING -- ALBEIT IN A DREAM?

We are meeting.

YES. BUT THEN PERHAPS I AM SIMPLY DREAMING OF YOU, DREAMING THAT YOU *SAID* THAT.

Perhaps.

YOU ALWAYS KNOW MORE THAN YOU SAY, OLD FRIEND. NO, IT'S *YOU.* THERE'S NO ONE ELSE WHO HAS *QUITE* YOUR WAY WITH WORDS.

DID YOU *MAKE* THIS PLACE? MRR?

I brought it about, yes. It was a place I knew you cared for.

WHY...YOU *SWEETHEART.*

YES. MY POOR LOST CITY.

AND MY PEOPLE. COME *HERE,* MY DARLING.

THE WRETCHED THING.

THESE ARE THE GHOSTS OF THOSE OF MY FOLK WHO WERE EMBALMED, THAT THEY WOULD LIVE FOREVER IN THE WORLD BEYOND

BUT THEIR PHYSICAL FORMS WERE *EXHUMED,* OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, GROUND UP AND USED TO FERTILIZE THE LAND.

NOW THEY ARE ONLY *MEMORIES,* SLOWLY FADING FROM THE LAND AND THE WORLD. *DREAMS* OF GHOST *CATS,* AND *CATS* OF GHOST DREAMS...

SSS. I KNOW HOW THEY *FEEL.*

DO YOU WISH TO STROKE HER?

I have no wish to--

I'M TEASING YOU, OLD FRIEND. HM. WELL, IF THIS IS ONE OF YOUR DREAMS, CAN YOU SHAPE US SOMEWHERE TO SIT?

Certainly.

MRRRRR...

LET ME SEE. I SUPPOSE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TODAY YOU THOUGHT TO YOURSELF:

"WHY, IT HAS BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE LAST I SAW LADY BAST, AND TOO LONG BEFORE THAT. IT HAS BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE WE SAT BENEATH THE SUMMER MOON TOGETHER AND TALKED OF PLEASANT FRIPPERIES, OF THAT AND OF THIS, AND LEFT OTHERS TO SPEAK SENSIBLE THINGS OF IMPORT AND CONSEQUENCE. I SHALL RECTIFY THIS ON A MOMENT."

AND SUITING THE THOUGHT TO THE DEED, YOU SOUGHT ME OUT.

BUT THEN, THAT IS NO LONGER YOUR WAY.

SO IT SEEMS TO ME MORE LIKELY THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ME TO TALK OF SENSIBLE THINGS. MRR?

You are most perceptive, my Lady Bast.

OH DREAM. I DO LOVE YOU, YOU KNOW. YOU MAKE ME LAUGH. WHY WEREN'T WE EVER LOVERS?

Perhaps you know me too well, my lady.

SEE? YOU'RE SO FUNNY.

WELL? WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

My brother. When last we met, you told me that you knew where he was to be found.

MRRR? DID I?

Bast.

PERHAPS I DID.

I need to know, Bast.

AND WHAT WOULD YOU *GIVE* ME, IF I *TOLD* YOU? WOULD YOU RUN WITH ME, IN THE NIGHT, UNDER THE *MOON*? WOULD YOU BE MY *TOM*?

You would ask that of me?

NO. NO I *WOULDN'T*. *CALM* YOURSELF. SO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND DESTRUCTION?

But you said--

I *KNOW* WHAT I SAID. I WAS *THERE*, AFTER ALL. AND I WAS *LYING*.

You were--?

I CANNOT HELP YOU.

NOT TELLING THE EXACT TRUTH. HAD *YOU* WISHED TO TAKE THE MATTER FURTHER I WOULD HAVE HAD TO ADMIT THAT I DID *NOT* KNOW YOUR BROTHER'S CURRENT LOCATION. HE HAS *NEVER* BEEN FOND OF MY FOLK, AFTER ALL.

I see.

SO, WHAT NOW? ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE ME, JUST AS MY DREAM BECOMES INTERESTING?

I don't know.

AH, THAT IS UNLIKE YOU. WHAT'S WRONG?

WHY DIDN'T YOU COME TO ME IN REALITY? WHY DO YOU COME TO ME IN MY DREAMS?

DREAM-KING? WHAT IS GOING ON?

I need to find my brother.

YOU WANT TO FIND HIM. WHY?

I do not want to. But... I am much afraid I need to.

Perhaps I should not have come here.

I LAST HEARD TELL OF YOUR BROTHER SIXTY YEARS AGO, IN PARIS. HIS COMPANION SAVAGED ONE OF MY PEOPLE. BUT I HAVE HEARD NOTHING SINCE. HE IS WELL HIDDEN.

MRRR.

TO FIND HIDDEN THINGS YOU NEED AN ORACLE.

WHY NOT TALK TO THE SPHINX?

I need no riddles. And there are no oracles who can tell me of my family, if my family do not wish it.

NONE?

You have been most helpful, my lady, and for that I thank you.

DREAM...?

BAST WAKES UP ON THE FLOOR OF HER SLEEPING PLACE.

HER DREAM FADES AS SHE WAKES. SHE REMEMBERS LITTLE OF IT. THERE WAS SOMEBODY SHE REALLY LIKED, SOMEBODY IN DIFFICULTY...

SHE COULDN'T HELP THEM.

THE DREAM COLORS HER MOOD. UNABLE TO SHAKE HER DEPRESSION, BAST PADS SILENTLY THROUGH THE VASTY HALLS OF HER TEMPLE, LOOKING FOR FOOD.

WHEN SHE FINDS IT SHE HAS NOT EVEN THE HEART TO PLAY.

SHE IS UNCOMFORTABLY AWARE OF THE ACHE IN HER SHOULDER JOINTS; AND THE RODENT'S BLOOD LACKS SAVOR AND TASTE.

HER EARS PRICK FORWARD: SOMEONE IS PRAYING TO HER. A YOUNG HUMAN FEMALE WHOSE CAT-COMPANION WAS RECENTLY HIT BY A CAR.

THE CAT IS BEYOND RECOVERY, AND BAST SENDS IT AN EASY DEATH.

THE EFFORT TIRES HER.

SHE REMEMBERS WHEN THE PRAYERS AND OFFERINGS SWARMED AROUND HER AT ALL TIMES, UNCOUNTABLE, WHEN SHE WOULD PICK AND CHOOSE BETWEEN THEM, SELECTING PRAYERS ON MERIT OR ON WHIM, ACCEPTING OR REJECTING OFFERINGS...

SHE IS BEGINNING TO BE SCARED OF DREAMS.

BAST IS GETTING OLD.

HEY, LOOSH? IT'S ME, MERV. LEMME IN.

the Library of Dreams

The Management cannot be held responsible for anything lost or found within

Signed
Lucien
Chief Librarian

YOU'RE LATE, MERVYN.

HEY, I'M A BUSY GUY, OKAY?

WHERE DO YOU WANT IT?

OH. UM. OVER THERE, PLEASE.

I HEAR THE BOSS CAME BACK.

YES. HE DID.

DON'T TELL ME--HE COMES BACK AND LOCKS HIMSELF IN HIS THRONE ROOM.

I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE, YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE, HELL, WE'VE ALL BEEN HERE BEFORE.

NEXT THING YOU KNOW, HE'S GONNA BE MOONING AROUND AGAIN--MOON MOON MOON.

HEY, YOU ASK ME, I MEAN, OKAY, HE'S OUR BOSS. YOU KNOW, RIGHT OR WRONG. BUT THE GUY'S A FLAKE.

THE DEATH OF KAI LUNG
Ernest Bramah
CHANTICLEER'S DANCE Hope Mirrlees
THE LAST VOYAGE OF LEMUEL GULLIVER Swift
THE EMPEROR OVER THE SEA C.S. Lewis
IAN AND ANN'S
OOK OF DAYS
PHOENIX

BUT I BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS--YOU WORK WITH YOUR HANDS, YOU GOT A LOT OF TIME FOR THINKING--AND WHAT I FIGURE IS THIS. IT'S NOT HIS FAULT. Y'KNOW? IT'S LIKE, YOU HANG OUT WITH POETS AND THOSE GUYS, YOU'RE BOUND TA GO A LITTLE FLAKY.

HE OUGHTA HANG OUT WITH GUYS LIKE ME. THE SALT-A THE EARTH, REAL EVERYDAY JOES. Y'KNOW? WE'D SET HIM STRAIGHT.

I MEAN, LOOK AT YOU--

phhhhht!

--YOU'RE A BOOK-PUSHER. I MEAN, HEY, NUTHIN' AGAINST BOOKS, BUT SEEMS TO ME THAT THESE DAYS YOU'RE PRACTICALLY RUNNING THIS PLACE.

THE OLD DAYS, A HUNDRED YEARS WOULD GO BY AND HE WOULDN'TA SAID MAYBE A DOZEN WORDS TO YOU--

But then, when I was held captive, and the castle crumbled, Lucien stayed here, and did his duty as best he saw it, while the rest of you fled. Who else here can make that claim?

You, Mervyn? What did you do while I was imprisoned?

I, UH. BIT A THIS. BIT A THAT. I DROVE A BUS...

And would you care to explain exactly in what way I am... what was your word? Flaky?

UH.

Well? I thought I heard you say you were going to set me straight.

HEHH. UH.

Lucien demonstrated loyalty and faith. I see nothing strange about placing my trust in him.

HEY. I'M WITH YOU, BOSS.

I am pleased to hear it. Now if you will excuse us...

YEAH. SURE. NO PROBLEM.

YOU KNOW ME, BOSS. OL' MERV PUMPKINHEAD, WHAT A KIDDER!

Lucien, when we last spoke...

AH YES, LORD. YOU WISHED ENQUIRIES TO BE MADE CONCERNING CERTAIN FORCES ACTING CONTRARY TO YOUR INTERESTS ON YOUR JOURNEYING.

And you have investigated, and found nothing.

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I know.

MY LORD, THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I THOUGHT I SHOULD INFORM YOU OF, WITHOUT DELAY.

IT IS, OF COURSE, PERFECTLY POSSIBLE THAT YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT IT ALREADY, HOWEVER...

Yes?

THERE IS SOMETHING HAPPENING, MY LORD. IN YOUR GALLERY.

I see.

IT HAPPENED THIS MORNING. IT JUST WENT BLACK.

I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW.

My sister? I stand in my gallery, and I hold your sigil. We should talk.

Will you come to me?

HELLO, LUCIEN. HOW'S THE LIBRARY?

MY LADY. ALL GOES WELL. I THANK YOU FOR ASKING.

OH GOOD. I HAVE TO COME AND BORROW SOME BOOKS FROM YOU. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO READ.

My sister...?

I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.

LUCIEN, HAVE YOU GOT ANY THING WITH A HAPPY ENDING? AND NICE PEOPLE IN IT? OR FUNNY ANIMALS?

I... UH... MY LADY... WHATEVER YOU, ERM... ANYTHING YOU NEED... I... UH...

You are not talking to me?

THAT'S NOT NICE, SENDING HIM AWAY LIKE THAT. HE WAS GOING TO FIND ME A BOOK.

And why are you not talking to me?

Well, my sister?

BECAUSE I'M MAD AT YOU. THAT'S WHY I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU.

?

WHAT DID YOU DO TO DELIRIUM?

I beg your pardon?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER? SHE'S CLOSED OFF HER REALM. YOU'VE SEEN HER SIGIL.

IT'S BLACK. WHAT DID YOU DO?
I did nothing to her.
DREEEAM?
I merely curtailed our journeyings.
DREAM...?
I was trying to protect her.
DREAM...
I called you... as soon as I saw it...I called you...
HMPH.
WELL, YOU BETTER DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
Such as?
YOU KNOW WHAT SHE'S LIKE. SHE'S NOT EXACTLY STABLE. SHE'S ONLY A KID. GO AND TALK TO HER.
...Why me?
YOU UPSET HER. YOU SORT IT OUT.
But she's closed her realm... She will not want visitors.
OF COURSE SHE DOESN'T WANT VISITORS. SHE'S IN A SNIT.
BUT YOU CAN STILL GO TO HER REALM. GO AND TALK HER OUT OF IT.
But--
I'M NOT HAVING HER GOING THE SAME WAY DESTRUCTION DID...
Very well. I will talk to her. Is that all?
YES. I SUPPOSE IT IS.
LOOK, DREAM. I KNOW THAT THINGS HAVEN'T BEEN EASY ON YOU RECENTLY.
AND I HEARD YOUR LATEST FLAME BURNT OUT, AND I KNOW THAT THAT ALWAYS LEAVES YOU IN A ROTTEN MOOD. BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN IT OUT ON DELIRIUM.
But I didn't...

"DON'T LOSE YOUR TEMPER WITH HER."

AND HE ENTERS DELIRIUM'S WORLD:

a woman stands with doves on her shoulders. the doves are scorpions. the woman is a small pool of ice-cream, melting on a sidewalk on a hot summer's day

ten days without sleep lurches and bubbles towards him and through him and away

SEDUCTION

mediocre

wasn't good enough,

the sour, clinical smell of a hospital, which brings with it beds and surgeons and saline drips

dark rooms filled with formless people who breathe bitter shrouds

unripe mind apples tumble screaming through the sky, and the stars gasp in brief flashes of pain and time

I feel her presence, and slowly I move toward her,

(put the gun in your mouth put the gun in your mouth put the gun in your mouth)

putrid the sea heaves in slow, glutinous waves that stink and shudder and fetal shapes that bob and gleam and wail

the sea is a princess who had a dance very unusual. the alien is an alien. the dance is an alley where the babies die...

toward the center of her realm.

Tempus Fugit

My sister? Do you hear me?

My sister?

You...you have a remarkable sundial.

IT'S STOPPED.

I DON'T LUHLUHLIKE IT AT ALL. IT'S STOPPED. IT'S NOT GOING ANY MORE. I HATE IT.

AND I HATE YOU.

I SHOULD NEVER HAVE TRUSTED YOU.

IF YOU WEREN'T MY BROTHER I'D MAKE IT SO YOU COULD NEVER GET OUT OF MY WORLD. SO WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE OUT OF MY WORLD YOU'D JUST BE FURTHER IN.

MAYBE I WILL. HAVE YOU EVER GONE MAD, DREAM?

I COULD DO THAT. I COULD DO IT IF I WANTED. YOU AREN'T EVEN WEARING YOUR HELM.

Hush, little sister.

GO. AWAY.

If that is what you wish, then I will go away. But first, if I may, I would talk with you.

I... I wish to apologize.

I travelled with you through the waking world because I hoped ... foolishly perhaps, on reflection ... to encounter a young lady with whom I had earlier had a...parting of the ways. She had returned to the waking world, and travelling with you gave me an excuse...

I was not seeking our brother.

When I realized that our quest was having repercussions, I deemed it sensible to call it off.

I did not do this with ill-will, my sister, but because I felt that travelling further could only have worsened matters.

Since then I have thought about this, and have made a further enquiry on my own.

If you are willing to travel with me... I would resume our journey together.

UM. DREAM? DO YOU LIKE ME?

Yes... I suppose I must do, Delirium. You entertain me. And it distresses me to see you troubled.

REALLY?

Really.

WELL... I LIKE YOU TOO, I THINK. WHEN YOU DON'T TEASE ME.

SO LET'S GO AND FIND HIM PROPERLY THIS TIME.

READY OR NOT. HERE WE COME.

To Be Continued

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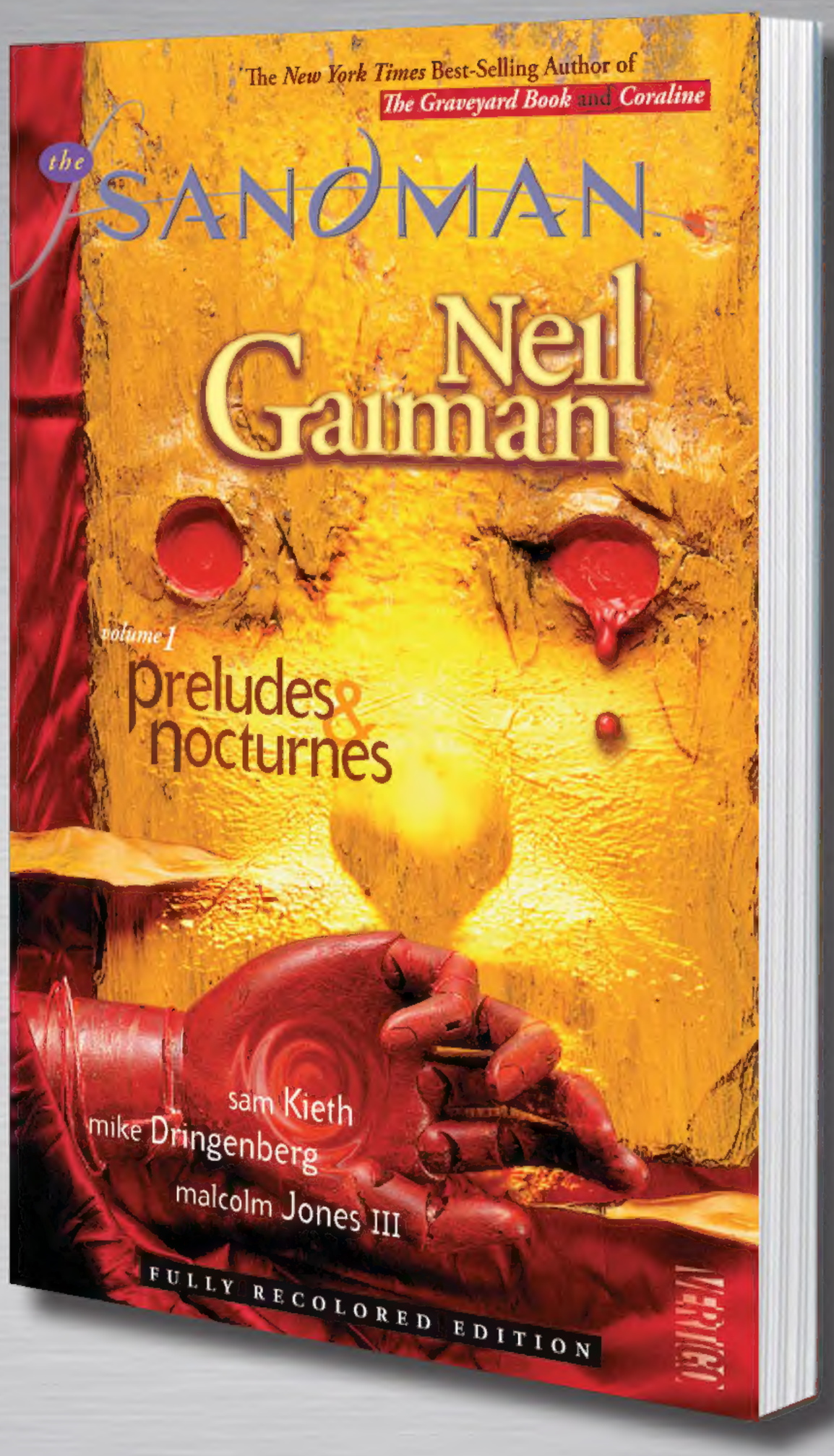

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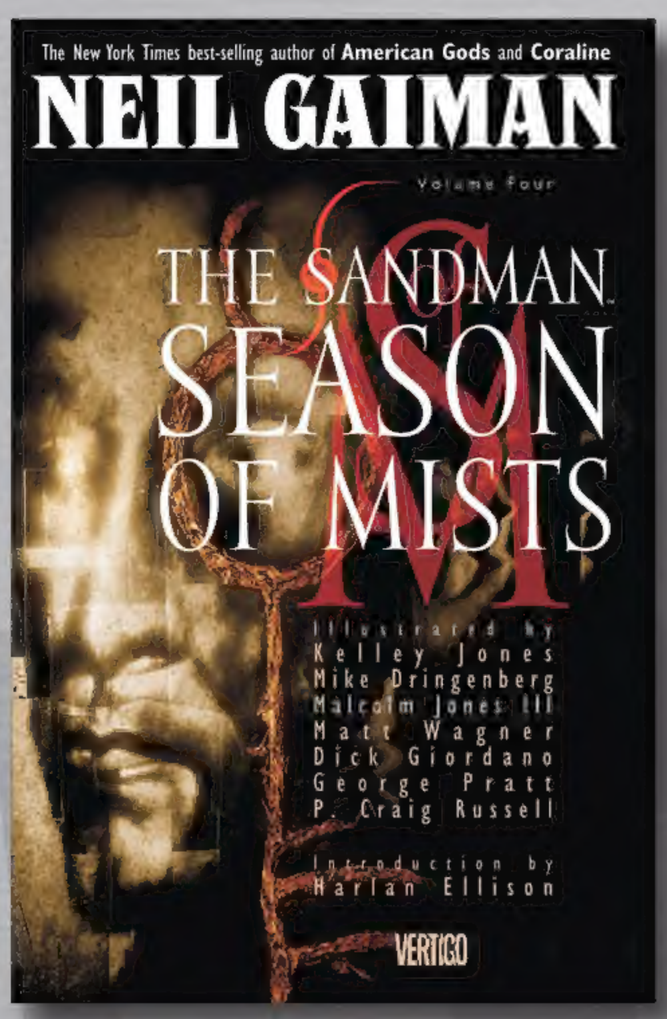

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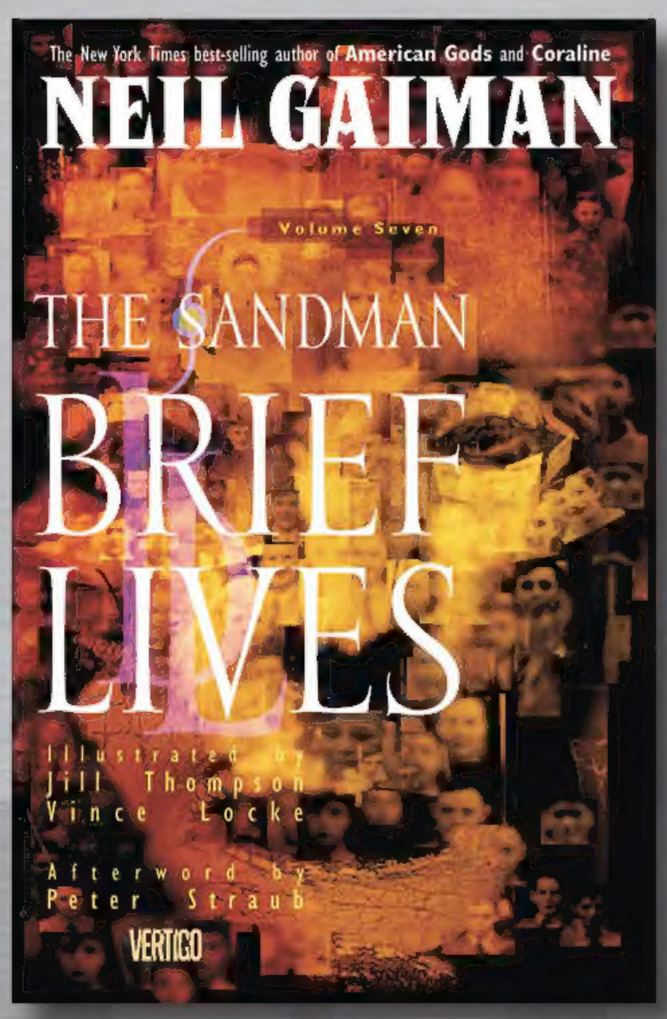

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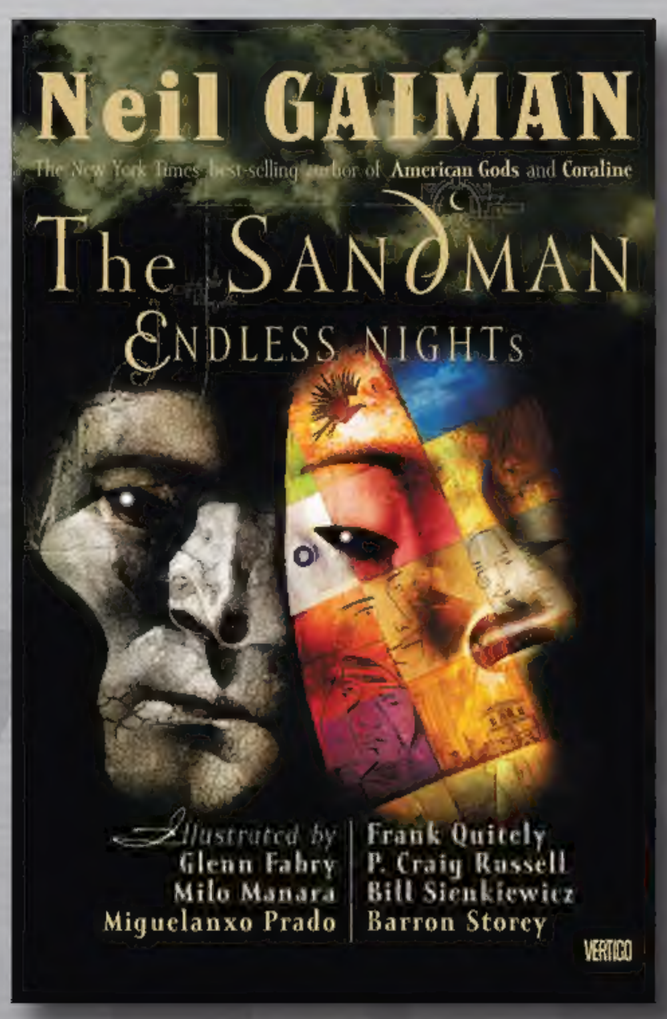

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